

# The Builder.

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THE frightful differences continually found in builders' estimates, for the same work, have been often brought before our readers, with a view to induce the exercise of greater care, and the application of sounder knowledge, in the preparation of them. We have been blamed in some few quarters, for the publication of these startling discrepancies, but are satisfied that the course is judicious, and must ultimately have a salutary effect, though probably it will be some time first.

We opened tenders this morning, submitted by four respectable tradesmen, for painting a residence. The highest was 320*l.*, the lowest 190*l.* Not long ago a public advertisement for tenders to erect an Infant School brought us nine; the highest of which was 800*l.*, while the lowest was under 300*l.*

At this moment we have before us ten lists of tenders, forwarded within the last week, all for small matters, and in none of these is the lowest more than half the highest, while in several it is even less.

Look, for example, at the following tenders for certain alterations at the London Mechanics' Institution:—

Langwith .....	£385 0
Killar .....	275 10
Higgs .....	249 17
Saunders .....	230 0
Parry and Son .....	208 12
Furnival .....	206 0
Hawken .....	193 0
Mason .....	182 0

Or these, for the erection of a new entrance to the Jews' Burial-ground, in North-street, Whitechapel:—

Evans .....	£214
Fawcett .....	144
Kirk .....	133
Goddard .....	132
Hickman .....	109

Or others, four in number, for painting two houses at Tulke Hill, whereof the highest was 225*l.*, the lowest, 108*l.*; and in this case, moreover, the quantities were supplied to the parties.

We are not now speaking of large contracts, only occasionally made, wherein differences to the extent of thousands are sometimes found, as shewn in our pages,—but of small matters, of every day occurrence, wherein it would seem to be scarcely possible to make a mistake.

How do the differences arise? They cannot be from the superior facilities possessed by one builder over another—superior skill and greater command of capital—the discrepancy is too great to be thus accounted for; but in five cases out of six must be ascribed to ignorance or knavery.

The results are disastrous to all, not excluding the employer, who has bad work instead of good (to say nothing of an occasional law suit); and the architect, who is perpetually at war with the builder, and for six times the due share of trouble and anxiety, is expected to charge his commission on the inadequate amount paid to the contractor.

We would urge builders who are invited to tender, to make no estimates hastily, or on imperfect information; and those who have

not had practice in such matters, to obtain proper assistance, or decline entering into it. Excepting under very peculiar circumstances, it is better to do nothing than to toil and throw away money. We are not advocating an extortionate rate of profit, but we maintain that a man should be paid fairly for what he does; and that when he is not, an injustice is committed which extends widely; and that when he himself undertakes to execute work on other terms, he acts dishonestly, as he must either rob his employer, his merchants, or his own family. As regards the ability of our workmen, and the goodness of English workmanship, the system has operated most injuriously, we might almost say fatally.

There is after all, great hope that the sacrifice of the triumphal arch at Hyde-park corner, and the colossal statue of Wellington, may be prevented. Sir Robert Inglis having moved for and obtained copies of the correspondence on this matter, Mr. C. Berkeley proposed on the 24th ult., "that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying her Majesty to withdraw her consent to the placing of the statue of the Duke of Wellington upon the archway at the top of Constitution-hill," and laid before the House such clear evidence of the universal feeling which prevails against the proposition, that not a single member could be found to back Sir Frederick Trench in his defence of the measure. A letter from Mr. Decimus Burton, the architect of the arch, dated a year ago, says precisely what we said at that same time, had said previously, and have since urged again and again:—

"The Wellington Testimonial is a single equestrian statue of colossal dimensions, viz., about 30 feet high: its weight, exclusive of the plinth, about 40 tons. It would not be a satisfactory surmount for the arch; colossal as it is, the horse, when placed on so huge a pedestal, would present an appearance far too meagre and tall for the situation. Proportion and unity of design are the first and most important elements in a work of art; both of these would be wanting in this instance if such a statue were placed upon the arch. The fact that the monument was not the design of one and the same artist would strike the most casual observer."

Again;—"I am convinced that, in an artistic point of view, it would be inappropriate to place a colossal equestrian statue on a building which is small as a triumphal arch, but huge as a pedestal; and that the result cannot be satisfactory to the sculptor nor to the architect, because both their works must suffer. The relative proportions of the building, and the statue proposed as its surmount, are entirely inharmonious. The statue is about 27 feet high, 23 feet long, and 8 feet wide at the centre; but it will present no mass below the horse's belly; on the contrary, there will be a large void. The building proposed as its pedestal is 67 feet high, 62 feet long, and 50 feet wide at the centre—dimensions constituting a mass far too heavy to combine, satisfactorily, with a surmount composed of a single equestrian statue." \* \* \* "The arch would, I consider, suffer greatly in importance if the colossal statue in question be placed there, because it would become a mere pedestal. The want of proportion in the proposed surmount, compared with the columns and other details of the architecture, would shew that they had been designed by different hands and without reference to each other. Much as I have desired to witness the completion of this building, with surmount statues over the columns, and bas-reliefs on the walls, as originally designed by me, and as approved of by the Lords of the Treasury, yet I would prefer that the building should remain for the present in its forlorn and bare state, rather than a colossal equestrian statue should be placed upon it; and the more so, because I fear that if this appropriation of the building should be decided upon, a pro-

position would soon be made for removing altogether the façades of columns, the slender proportions of which would appear so incongruous and out of proportion compared with the prodigious dimensions of the statue."

Lord Morpeth said, he partook to the full in the misgivings which had been expressed by other hon. gentlemen, and by his two noble predecessors in the office which he had the honour to fill, and which, he believed he might add, had been backed by very many and competent professional authorities; and, although they found that the consent and authority of the preceding Government had been signified to the persons who wished to erect this statue, to place it in the situation proposed, and that some progress had been made in the actual work, and some expense already incurred, yet he confessed that, even at that moment, he did wish very much that those who represented the subscribers could persuade themselves to accede to the offer made to them by the Government, to procure another site, and, if they did, he would assure them that no pecuniary difficulty should stand in the way.\*

Sir Frederick Trench laboured to make out a case, but failed entirely: he ventured to say, "It would be an act of great disrespect to the Crown, if her Majesty, after having given her solemn pledge in favour of a particular plan, should be called upon, after the committee had spent a considerable sum of money, to throw all their proceedings over because certain gentlemen of the House of Commons chose to condemn it"—as if the only objectors were in the house.

Sir Robert Inglis was obliged to tell the gallant member, "that he believed that, if the opinion of the House were taken *seriatim*, it would be found to be almost unanimously against placing the statue upon the arch. It would be one of the greatest monstrosities in the metropolis." And ultimately, Sir Frederick begged time to communicate the wishes of Government and the House to his colleagues, and obtained it, with the understanding that the works would be entirely stopped, until the committee had signified their assent to the suggestions of the Government, or failing that, until the opinion of the House had been taken upon it.

We have much confidence in Lord Morpeth, and hope soon to communicate the removal of the scaffolding.

## DECORATIONS OF BUILDINGS IN FRANCE.

In our foreign article last week, mention was made of the additions to the lunatic asylum at Charenton, now nearly completed. The manner in which the works are done there contrasts singularly with the course followed in England. The object appears to have been, to provide the best accommodation, and to obtain the best effect quite regardless of expense. In the chapel, for example, which takes the shape of a Doric pronaos temple, the decorations are superb, including a profusion of frescos and gildings.

\* Lord Canning, just previously to his removal from office as Chief of the Woods and Forests, wrote to the Duke of Rutland, as chairman of the committee, stating, "that the remonstrances which reach her Majesty's Government against the proposed appropriation of the arch are so many and so strong, the representations of its architect, Mr. Burton, in the same sense, are so earnest, and the opinion of every other eminent architect, artist, or other competent authority who has been consulted on the subject, is so decided, that her Majesty's Government feel called upon not only to make a final effort to induce the subscribers to reconsider the project of placing the statue on the site at present proposed, but to do all that lies in their power to facilitate a change in the design."

\* If we mistake not, the statue is now larger still.